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ABSTRACT

On most international comparisons of educational achievement, United States' schools fare poorly. A closer look at how several foreign countries educate their children, as well as the political process for setting educational policies, suggests a multitude of initiatives that could be profitably adapted to the American educational system. A survey of foreign schools also permits an objectivity in examining the relationship between a nation's culture and its schools that is difficult to obtain when examining only U.S. schools. This book provides a cross cultural analysis of U.S. and foreign schools, based on the perspectives of teachers in a foreign teaching corps that came to America as Fulbright exchange students. Chapters in the book are: (1) "Schooling Across Cultures"; (2) "The American Educational System"; (3) "Denmark--Education in a Welfare State"; (4) "Germany--A Tradition of Quality"; (5) "England--A Nation Reforms Its Schools"; (6) "Canada--Our Cultural Cousins"; (7) "Japan--A Culture Shapes its Schools"; (8) "Comparing Schools in Six Cultures"; (9) "Cultural and Societal Influences on the Schools"; and (10) "Lessons for America's Schools." Each of the chapters includes references. Among the observations made of U.S. schools by the Fulbright exchange teachers are the following: (1) American teachers worked a longer day than foreign teachers, much of it at menial duties; (2) American parents have a greater say in their children's education than foreign parents, and are chiefly responsible for grade inflation in American schools; (3) the American concept of local control accounts for a hodgepodge curriculum and terrible discrepancies in the funding base between U.S. school districts; and (4) because of the lack of a national exam in the U.S., American parents want high grades and want easier teachers--American teachers are viewed as antagonists and impediments by parents instead of as friends. (Contains a 94-item bibliography.)

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